



ARAB INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S FORUM

المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

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**PREREQUISITE FOR PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES:
WOMEN AS ENGINES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE ARAB WORLD**

Where women prosper, so do families, communities – even society itself. So state the findings of The Arab International Women's Forum Programme which launches its 2005 Programme Report and Recommendations: *Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World*, at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. At the core of the Report and Recommendations is the view that when women increase their participation in the economy, they help nurture a secure, stable and peaceful society.

"The impact of overcoming challenges and increasing opportunities for women will be seen as the next major breakthrough in economic development in the Arab world. This report puts women at the heart of the agenda for policy makers as they renegotiate an important Euro-Med treaty." - Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani, Founder & Chairman of AIWF.

Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells said: ***"The Euro-Med Summit will be a unique opportunity for us to demonstrate that our partnership is relevant to our peoples and can deliver results on the issues which matter to them."***

"This is about change. It is about recognising the enormous economic contributions of women – often unacknowledged and unwaged." - Emma Nicholson MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, and AIWF Conference Guest Speaker.

"Through economic development and prosperity comes stability. Stability improves the chance for peace." - Emma Bonino, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and AIWF 2005 Programme Partner.

The Arab International Women's Forum launched its 2005 Programme, ***Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World***, to mark the 10th anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. AIWF hosted two linked conferences to assess and evaluate the economic challenges still facing women in the Arab world and to explore opportunities for increasing participation in the labour force.

The two conferences held at European Parliament, in April, and at the League of Arab States in June, highlighted a series of practical and feasible recom-

recommendations for policy-makers and business leaders to improve literacy, numeracy, education and training; designed to empower women to become the entrepreneurs and corporate leaders of tomorrow in both rural and urban areas.

“Tackling illiteracy, particularly among women, is an enormous and fundamental challenge. We want to dedicate the next five years of the Euro Med partnership to make a real difference on education.” (Minister Kim Howells)

“There must be an international forum for ideas that give a voice to women in the Arab world – so that they may fully participate in business and public life. AIWF provides such a forum.” (Emma Bonino, MEP)

The report highlights several priority recommendations:

- Establishing an independent public body to promote equality for women
- Improving the legal framework to provide increased opportunities for women in business
- Monitoring and developing rural women's access to education and skills training
- Making EU and government funding more readily available to women
- Ensuring that school textbooks reflect new realities of diverse communities to help overcome gender stereotypes

The conference has the active support of Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. The purpose of GOF is to promote action on global issues in areas of strategic importance to the UK.

The AIWF 2005 Programme is recognised as a significant vehicle for the promotion of women's participation in economic and social affairs. Borne out of the Barcelona Declaration of 1995, which established a broad framework of political, economic and social relations between the member states of the European Union and partners of the Southern Mediterranean, this historic agreement was viewed as a turning point in Euro-Mediterranean relations, focussing on and emphasising the shared objective of establishing a common area of peace and stability. Ten years on this regional partnership takes on even greater importance in supporting the stability of the region and forging strong Euro – Mediterranean relations as it re-negotiates an important treaty.

Emma Nicholson MEP continues: “It is about tackling problems which confront us collectively and co-operating with friends and partners in other regions of the world to solve those problems. The AIWF programme is a timely reminder that we can do more together than separately.”

Mrs Al Kaylani concludes: “This report is the impetus for AIWF and its partners to advocate the necessary economic and social reforms they have identified so that women's position in the economies of Arab countries can be improved. AIWF seeks the greater participation of women as positive agents of change to move the agenda for prosperity and peace forward.”

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Arab International Women's Forum in Brief:

The Arab International Women's Forum (AIWF) is an independent non-profit organisation established in 2001 based in London. It brings growing numbers of influential business and professional women in the 22 Arab countries together with leading women in the United Kingdom, Europe and internationally. AIWF members are offering their support voluntarily. They have the opportunity to widen key contacts, foster cooperation, enhance their business, marketing and investment skills and increase their knowledge. AIWF works to break stereotypical images of women, create greater public awareness of their success and prospects within an international context, and, importantly, engage in capacity building and affect policy change.

The Arab International Women's Forum has collaborated with a number of governments, institutional and academic partners on the AIWF 2005 Programme. In addition to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, AIWF has worked closely with the valued cooperation of the League of Arab States, the European Commission, and the World Bank. The AIWF 2005 Programme is supported by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe at the European Parliament, the Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura, Spain, Instituto de Empresa Business School, Spain, No Peace Without Justice and the Women's Strategy Group of the Egyptian International Economic Forum. The AIWF 2005 Corporate Partners are Shell, IBM and the Commercial International Bank, Egypt.

Available:

Background information on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership,
About the AIWF 2005 Programme

For more information or to arrange for interviews, contact:

Daniel Aitkenhead, Edelman – 020 7344 1515, 07850 863 169;
email daniel.aitkenhead@edelman.com

Yvonne Beirne, 020 7344 1582; email yvonne.beirne@edelman.com

For more information on AIWF:

Debra Davis, 07903 45 99 55, debradavis@eh-communications.com
AIWF, 020 7409 7788, info@aiwfonline.com

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Global Opportunities Fund www.fco.gov.uk